



Happiness Secured AT A Heavy Cost!

CHAPTER VII. A VERITABLE GHOST.

MY first impulse is to fly from the room; but before I have time to gain my feet, a shadow falls on the window, and the next moment a tall, gray, shadowy figure, with a pair of wild eyes and a mass of disheveled hair falling about its shoulders, rises, as it seems to me, from the shrubs beneath it.

A veritable ghost, if ever there was one, that does not wait for the cold light of the moon to haunt the earth; and with my heart in my mouth, and a sensation as of every drop of blood going out at the ends of my fingers, I stand for one dreadful moment clutching at the nearest chair for support, staring into the face of that dim, spectral figure with a feeling that my limbs are turning to stone beneath me.

The figure is a woman's, with an almost unnatural paleness and shadowiness in the wasted form, to which a long dress of some gray material clings close as a winding sheet; yet with a certain wild grace in its every movement, a thrilling intensity in the large eyes, lighting a face that looks absolutely deathlike in its gray, ashy pallor.

Never in all my life have I seen or conceived within my own mind a figure more ghostlike and startling, but almost before I have time to draw my breath it throws up its long arms with a wild, despairing gesture, and disappears as suddenly as it came.

I have never faintly in all my life; but I am certainly very near it now, as I stand for one frightened, breathless moment, clinging to the back of the old tapestry-covered chair at which I have clutched in my terror for support, wondering, with a beating heart and a stealthy glance at the ghostly shadows hovering in the dim corners of the room, what can have become of my companions, and whether it would or would not be advisable to keep my own counsel as to what I have seen.

To tell the truth, I have grave doubts as to how my story would be received. I have no wish to be laughed at as a convert to the Deepdene ghost superstition; and in the event of its being seriously regarded, there is no good purpose to be served, so far as I am able to perceive, by creating an unfavourable impression on our new home before we have taken possession of it even.

A moment's reflection and the sound of returning steps decide me. Whatever the nature of that mysterious apparition—and can it be that there is some truth in the ghostly stories at-

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tached to the old place after all—something tells me that my wisest course will be silence, at least for the present.

At the same moment the door opens, and Addie, followed by Mr. Warden, enters the room, which I am secretly hoping must be too dark by this time to betray the pallor from which I am painfully conscious. I have not yet recovered.

"Did you think we had quite deserted you, Lesley?" she asks. "Thanks to Mr. Warden's excellent suggestions, it is all most beautifully settled. We have chosen three of the best rooms upstairs for bedrooms. The one for poor Len opens into a second apartment, which may be converted with very little trouble into a studio. This room is to be our drawing-room; if we make friends, as Mr. Warden assures me we shall, we must have some place in which to receive them, you know, Lesley. And the one on the opposite side of the hall, with the great bay windows looking into the garden, will do admirably for dining and sitting room. These will meet our requirements, in addition to the kitchen—a roomy, low-ceiled old place with great beams that seem to threaten one's eyebrows, and a wonderful old table, long and high enough to dine a regiment of giants, and with great carved legs, ever so much bigger round than my waist. Mr. Warden tells me the table once belonged to the refectory of the monks in the days when Deepdene was a monastery."

Greatly to my relief, for I am by no means certain as to the steadiness of my voice, I am spared the necessity of answering by Mr. Warden's suggestion that it is time to think of our return.

His suggestion is carried, without dissent. With a sense of relief I escape from the moldy atmosphere of the house, and follow my sister into the open air, while our escort lingers behind to close and lock the door.

It is a pleasant evening, with a golden light in the west, a perfume of young spring grass and sweet spring blossoms in the air; but to me, haunted as I am by the memory of that weird figure, there is something in the sight of the deserted house, with its quaint roof and tall background of dark firs, rising inky black against the pale primrose of the sky, into which crescent moon has begun to rise, that strikes me as gloomy and depressing to the last degree.

"I am afraid the garden will prove our chief difficulty," Addie is saying, as she saunters down the weedy path that leads to the gate. "What shall we do with it, I wonder. It is worse than the house."

"If that is a ruin, this is an utter wilderness; though, Heaven be praised! a picturesque wilderness. Those broken statues and tangled shrubs will just please Len, dear old Bohemian that he is; and oh! Lesley, think of the quiet days we shall have here for our work, Len and I—of the pictures we shall paint, the stories we shall write, inspired by the romance of Deepdene! Why, Lesley," she adds, in a tone of surprise, as she catches sight of my face, "what is the matter?—what makes you so pale, dear? Are you ill?"

"Ill?" I laugh, with a desperate effort at cheerfulness. "When was I ever ill? I believe it is the shadow of the trees that makes me look ghostly; and much as I love greenery, I believe there are rather too many trees about Deepdene. But come, Addie, Mr. Warden is waiting to put us back into our vehicle."

About halfway between Deepdene and Hanbury we are passed on the road by a couple of riders.

"A beautiful girl, with a mass of fair hair fastened under her hat, in a habit that could hardly have been more faultless as to fit and unexceptionable as to style had it been designed for exhibition in Rotten Row; and a

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young fellow, whose dress is equally suggestive of London.

Without slackening speed the fair equestrian lifts her whip, and displays her white teeth to our escort as she passes, bestowing at the same time upon Addie and me a glance that is not suggestive of unmitigated approval.

"What a pretty girl, Mr. Warden! Do you know her?" Addie inquires, too much interested in the appearance of the fair-haired horse-woman to notice the cynical expression with which that gentleman is staring after the receding figures of the riders.

"Yes, it is Gwendolen Clitheroe," is the response, "the daughter of a rector of Forton, that pretty, picturesque little village we passed about midway between Deepdene and Hanbury. Miss Clitheroe—who has spent two or three seasons in London with her aunt, Lady Woodville, a fashionable widow, who, on a not very extensive income, is said to somehow contrive to keep up a well-furnished house in the neighborhood of Harley Street, in which she gives delightful little dinners and lively receptions—is considered quite the beauty par excellence in this part of the world; and how it is that she has not contrived to make a grand match during her London season is a mystery with which the Hanbury mind seems quite unable to grapple. That was her brother riding with her," he supplements. "He is in the army, but home just now on leave of absence. I am not so well acquainted with Captain Clitheroe as with the rest of the family at the rectory, which consists, when the son is away, of the rector and his two daughters, of whom Gwendolen, who has kept her father's house since the death of her mother some three years since, is the eldest."

Whatever the character and history of the mysterious inmate of Ivy Cottage, we are evidently destined to remain in ignorance of it; for, although she still continues to come to us for a few hours daily, lending us a helping hand with our cleaning and dusting, Mrs. Martin maintains an inviolable silence on the subject of Mrs. Lennox—a mysterious being, whom, as I learn from other sources, no one in the neighborhood has ever spoken with or even seen; a fact that does not very much tend to allay my curiosity on the subject—a curiosity that is increased a hundredfold by an incident that serves to connect Mr. Ernest Warden with the mystery of the lonely little cottage, in my mind at least.

"(To be Continued.)"

Nothing is better than a clocked and ribbed silk stocking if one wishes to be conservative and at the same time smart.

CHAPTER VIII. THE SOMBER WOMAN.

THERE is one singular character which I must mention in connection with the early days at Deepdene. This is a woman named Martin, who has been sent to us by Mr. Warden to assist us in making the deserted old house presentable.

She is a wizened old creature, who always appears in a rusty black dress and a hideous cap, and looks not unlike a resuscitated corpse.

It is this rather somber specimen of industry who shares our existence in the midday old rooms for these first few days.

Old Mrs. Martin accompanies us on our exploring expeditions, and it is she who discovers for us the hidden recesses of the kitchen stairs, and points out the mysteries of antique closets. It is she, too, who sets out an unappetizing cup of tea on the top of a dresser or a wash-basin, and expects us to enjoy it—regardless of the surroundings.

She is a ghostlike old creature, with a ghastly relish for horrors, and in the course of acquaintance she develops a passion for regaling herself with tea and toast that is only equalled by her fondness for relating stories about the deaths of half the de-

funct residents of Hanbury, over which she appears to have presided for the last twenty years or more.

Not the most cheerful companion for a couple of half-frightened girls in a lonely, ghost-haunted old house like Deepdene; but, finding her both willing and strong, we decide to make the best of her.

An old woman in a tousel cap, and with a predilection for horrors, is a trifle better than nobody, we think, as we listen to her stories with all the patience we can muster.

One thing about Mrs. Martin, stupid and uninteresting as I think her, puzles and perplexes me sorely. Of herself and her own circumstances she never speaks. Voluble and communicative as she is about other things, this is a subject on which no amount of questioning seems able to extract from her the faintest information. Of her own life and affairs she tells us nothing, beyond the bare fact that she lives in a little white house with green shutters, and a mass of neglected ivy growing up over its roof, which is visible from the windows of Deepdene.

"Do you mean the little place they call Ivy Cottage, Mrs. Martin?" I exclaim, in response to this very scanty piece of hardy-extracted information. "And you live there by yourself? Dear me, how very lonely you must be!"

"Oh, no, miss, not quite alone! Didn't you know? I thought Mr. Warden might have explained. I live there as attendant on a lady named Lennox," she replied—addie an uneasy look in the pale, white-lashed eyes, that never seem to look any one straight in the face.

"Attendant on a lady!" I repeat, in astonishment. "Why, Mrs. Martin, I wonder your mistress is willing to spare you to come to us."

"Well, miss, you see there is not a great deal to do at the cottage, being but one in family, as one may say."

"Then Mrs. Lennox has no children? Is she a widow? and does she receive no visitors?"

"She is quite alone; and her health is too bad, poor dear, for her to care about company, though of course I couldn't have been spared for any other reason than to oblige Mr. Warden, who has been a good friend to me ever since I lost my poor husband, who was a clerk in the office in old Mr. Warden's time," is the reply; and then her thin, bluish-white lips shut like a vise, and Mrs. Martin refuses to speak further.

Whatever the character and history of the mysterious inmate of Ivy Cottage, we are evidently destined to remain in ignorance of it; for, although she still continues to come to us for a few hours daily, lending us a helping hand with our cleaning and dusting, Mrs. Martin maintains an inviolable silence on the subject of Mrs. Lennox—a mysterious being, whom, as I learn from other sources, no one in the neighborhood has ever spoken with or even seen; a fact that does not very much tend to allay my curiosity on the subject—a curiosity that is increased a hundredfold by an incident that serves to connect Mr. Ernest Warden with the mystery of the lonely little cottage, in my mind at least.

(To be Continued.)

MOTHERS TO BE

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WAR SUMMARY.

The Germans are now imposing strong opposition to the further advance of the Allied troops along the Nettle River from the east of Soissons to the region west of Rheims. Meanwhile, however, the main body of the enemy army continues to make their way toward the Aisne, to the north of which stream they hope somewhat to reach a haven of safety from the persistent onslaughts of the British, French, American and Italian troops who in less than three weeks have all but blotted out the Soissons-Rheims salient. Notwithstanding the bringing into play by the enemy of large numbers of machine guns and artillery of heavier calibre, and the employment of large numbers of picked troops, including the well-tried Prussian Guards and the Bavarians, and despite the fact that the rains have sent the Yselle out of bounds and turned into quagmires, the Allied troops have forced crossings of the River at a number of new points, and on the north side of the stream are engaging the enemy. The latest French official communication, which recent ly has been extremely modest in chronicle gains made by the Allies, says that Monday saw only local engagements and that the situation of the battlefield is without change. Correspondents with the Allied headquarters, however, assert that at several points between Semoules, which lies to the east of Soissons and Fismes, and between Fismes and the Mulay, the French and Americans have taken further ground across the Yselle and have nullified German counter attacks delivered in an endeavour to recover their losses. Between the Mulay and Champigny the Prussian Guards and the Bavarians again suffered heavy losses in their efforts to hold back their antagonists. The Germans jealously are guarding this part of the line, as an advance there to any considerable depth would compel them to entirely lose their hold on the territory in which they are entrenched around the shell-torn city of Rheims. In addition to the heavy infantry actions here, violent bombardments also are in progress. It is not expected in Allied military circles that it is the purpose of the Germans to turn about and face their enemies south of the Aisne. The Hill region to the north of the Aisne, probably the old Chemin-de-Dames battlefield, is considered the more probable sector in which the German Crown Prince will elect again to test the mettle of the men of General Foch's command. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that the greater portion of the western battlefield shortly may undergo material changes in position. From the southeast of Amiens near Mont Didier, northward to the region around Ypres, the German front seems all tremble with expectancy. In addition to a retreat around Mont Didier to the west bank of the Aisne River, retrograde movements in the face of attacks around Albert and an evacuation of territory over a front of half a mile north of La Bassée Canal, the Germans are nervously bombarding British and French positions at various points, possibly with the idea of ascertaining their strength. (The Hebuterne, LA

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